BATTLEWORLD

Red Skull™

MARVEL

WILLIAMSON
PIZZARI
BEREDO

002

SECRET WARS

SECRET WARS

THE MULTIVERSE WAS DESTROYED!
ALL THAT REMAINS IS **BATTLEWORLD:** A MASSIVE, PATCHWORK PLANET COMPOSED OF THE FRAGMENTS OF WORLDS THAT NO LONGER EXIST, MAINTAINED BY THE IRON WILL OF ITS GOD AND MASTER, VICTOR VON DOOM!

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AFTER FAILING TO OVERTHROW DOOM, THE RED SKULL WAS SENT OVER THE SHIELD AS PUNISHMENT. ALTHOUGH OFFICIALLY DECLARED DEAD, HE BECAME A SYMBOL OF DISSENT FOR SOME DENIZENS OF BATTLEWORLD THAT BELIEVED HIM TO STILL BE ALIVE. IN RESPONSE, LORD DOOM TASKED A SMALL STRIKE FORCE OF CRIMINALS TO RETRIEVE PROOF OF RED SKULL'S DEMISE IN RETURN FOR THEIR FREEDOM. UPON GOING OVER THE WALL, ALL BUT MAGNETO WERE LOST TO THE ZOMBIE HORDE. OVERWHELMED AND ALONE, MAGNETO WAS RESCUED BY NONE OTHER THAN THE RED SKULL HIMSELF!

Red Skull

• PART TWO: ANNIHILATION •

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RED SKULL?! YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD!

FOR MORE YEARS THAN I'D LIKE TO ADMIT, I BATTLED ONE OF THE GREATEST FIGHTERS EVER PRODUCED BY INFERIOR WESTERN MINDS...

SLLLSSSH

DO YOU REALLY THINK I CAN'T HOLD MY OWN AGAINST THE HORDES OF THE UNDEAD?!

KRSH

THEN WHY DID YOU DO *NOTHING* TO SAVE THE OTHERS?!

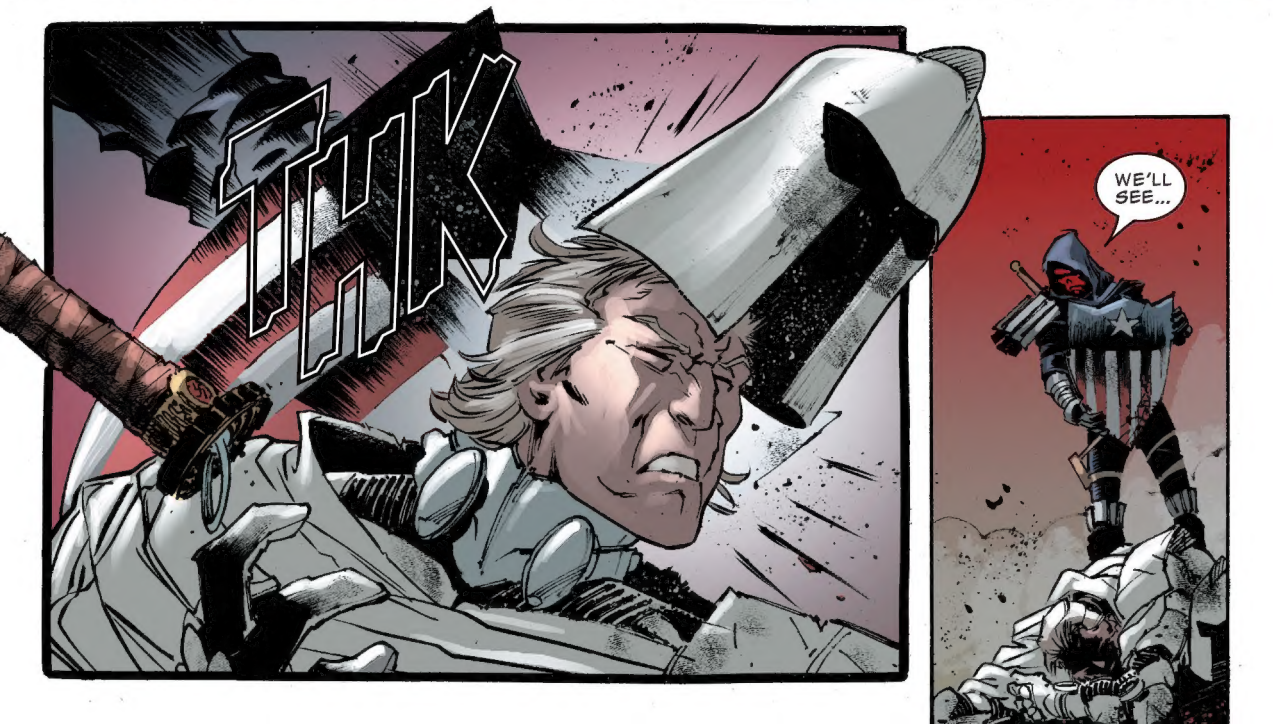
YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE I DEEMED WORTHY OF SAVING, *MAGNETO!*

TAKE THIS! THEIR BONES ARE BRITTLE, SO EVEN IN YOUR WEAKENED STATE THEY WILL BE NO MATCH FOR YOU.

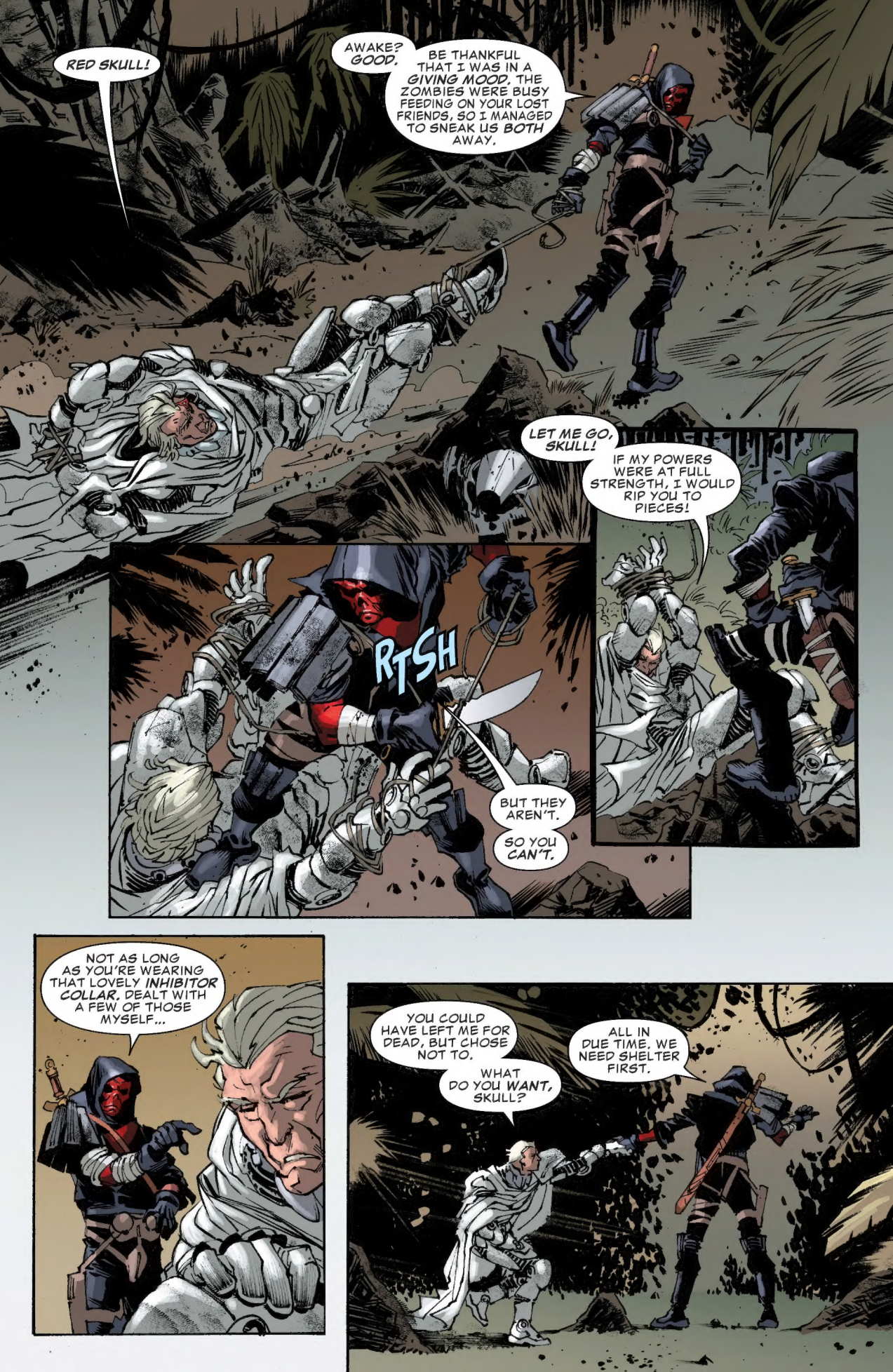
HM.

ANY CHANCE TO *SULLY* HIS CURSED MEMORY...

...I TAKE IT!
YOU'RE DIFFERENT THAN THE RED SKULL I ONCE KNEW, BUT I DOUBT YOUR ROTTEN APPLE FELL FAR FROM THAT TREE.
JUST BECAUSE WE'RE TRAPPED IN THIS HELL TOGETHER DOES NOT MEAN I WILL FIGHT SIDE BY SIDE WITH A MONSTER AS DISGUSTING AS OUR ATTACKERS!


THK
WE'LL SEE...

MAGNETO?
WHAT IS THAT?!
ROGUE...?
IT'S DESTROYING OUR WORLD!
SAVE US!
NO...


RED SKULL!
AWAKE? GOOD.
BE THANKFUL THAT I WAS IN A GIVING MOOD, THE ZOMBIES WERE BUSY FEEDING ON YOUR LOST FRIENDS, SO I MANAGED TO SNEAK US BOTH AWAY.
LET ME GO, SKULL!
IF MY POWERS WERE AT FULL STRENGTH, I WOULD RIP YOU TO PIECES!
RTSH
BUT THEY AREN'T.
SO YOU CAN'T.
NOT AS LONG AS YOU'RE WEARING THAT LOVELY INHIBITOR COLLAR. DEALT WITH A FEW OF THOSE MYSELF...
YOU COULD HAVE LEFT ME FOR DEAD, BUT CHOSE NOT TO.
WHAT DO YOU WANT, SKULL?
ALL IN DUE TIME. WE NEED SHELTER FIRST.

AT ONE POINT, I FOOLISHLY BELIEVED I COULD RESTORE THIS SENTINEL AND ASSAULT THE SHIELD MYSELF...BUT I WAS ALWAYS BETTER ON THE PODIUM THAN AS AN ENGINEER.
HURRY. I'VE MANAGED TO KEEP THIS A SECRET FOR MONTHS.
I'M NOT CLIMBING INTO THE MOUTH OF A SENTINEL.
IT'S EITHER THIS MOUTH OR THEIRS.
WOULD YOU RATHER FILL THE STOMACH OF ONE OF THOSE CREATURES?
...INTO THE BELLY OF THE BEAST THEN.
HOME SWEET HOME.
I'M SOMEWHAT SURPRISED THAT YOU DON'T GET ALONG WITH THOSE NIGHTMARES.
BECAUSE MY VISAGE HAS BEEN STRIPPED OF ITS WEAK FLESH? IT JUST MAKES ME HARD TO TRACK...I HAVE LESS SKIN FOR THEM TO SMELL.
TRASK COOLING FLUID

HM... YOU'VE BEEN BUSY.
YOU MUST FIRST KNOW YOUR ENEMIES' BORDERS IF YOU WISH TO CROSS THEM.
WHERE... WHAT DOMAIN DID YOU CALL HOME BEFORE THIS DREADFUL PLACE?

DOES IT MATTER?

IF ALL THE HORROR STORIES I'VE HEARD OF THE RED SKULL ARE TRUE...YOU WOULD NEVER SAVE ME...OR ANYONE FOR THAT MATTER...

THE DEADLANDS HAVE A WAY OF... CHANGING PEOPLE.
MAKING THEM DO THINGS THEY NEVER THOUGHT THEY'D DO.
SENTINEL COOLANT?
NO.

YOU'RE MAD.
I'M A SURVIVOR.
THE COOLANT KEEPS ME ON EDGE AS I EXPLORE THE SHIELD'S WEAKNESSES.

IT'S TRUE THEN. YOU'RE STUDYING THE SHIELD?
YOU COULD SAY THAT...
DO YOU KNOW HOW TO TEAR THE SHIELD DOWN OR NOT?
IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN MY *BUSINESS* TO FIND THE CRACKS IN ONE SHIELD OR ANOTHER...AND I HAVE LONG SINCE FOUND THIS ONE.
I KEEP THAT KNOWLEDGE IN THE SAFEST PLACE I KNOW.
TAP
TAP
TAP
BUT I NEED A TOOL TO HAMMER AT THE SHIELD...
I BELIEVE *YOU* ARE THAT TOOL.
TAP
I'D *RATHER DIE!*
THAT CAN EASILY BE ARRANGED!
I COULD KILL YOU. DOOM'S SOLE ORDER WAS PROOF OF YOUR *DEATH.*
THEN I'D BE FREE.
IF ONLY THERE WAS A WAY TO REMOVE THE COLLAR...

EVEN BEFORE I WORE THIS CURSED THING...I WAS BUT ONE OF MANY OPPRESSED BY DOOM.
YOU ACT AS IF YOU WOULD BE ANY DIFFERENT A RULER.
THEN YOU KNOW THAT DOOM NEEDS TO FALL SO THAT BATTLEWORLD CAN BE FREE.
WOULD DOOM HELP YOU, MASTER OF MAGNETISM?
THIS BLADE IS PURE ADAMANTIUM STRIPPED FROM THE HIDE OF A FALLEN ULTRON.
USE YOUR MIGHTY POWERS...
STRIKE ME DOWN AND TAKE MY DEAD BODY TO YOUR MASTERS!
I... WILL...
PATHETIC. LOOK WHAT DOOM'S WORLD HAS DONE. EXTINGUISHED THE FIRE THAT ONCE BURNED SO BRIGHT INSIDE YOU.
HARDLY. YOU ARE...DEAD INSIDE.
I... WILL...KILL... YOU...

DON'T NEED MY POWERS--
--TO KILL YOU!

DARING, MUTANT...
...BUT WITHOUT THEM...
...YOU ARE CLOSER TO THE COMMON HUMAN...
...WHILE I...

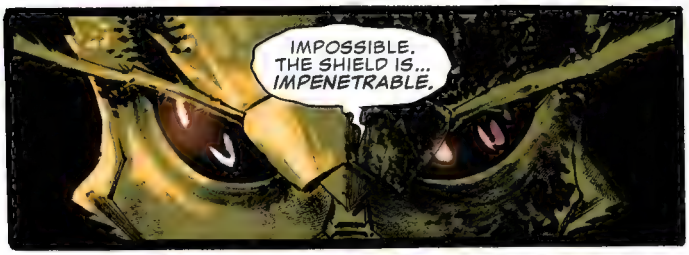
...AM SUPER-HUMAN!
THAT WAS A VALIANT EFFORT.
I ADMIRE THE ATTEMPT... I'LL EVEN LET YOU KEEP THE BLADE AS A SORT OF...
...PARTICIPATION AWARD.
IT DOESN'T MATTER. YOU SHOULD HAVE LET ME DIE.
AS LONG AS I WEAR THIS COLLAR, I AM NOT MY TRUE SELF AND OF NO USE FOR WHATEVER INSANE SCHEME YOU MAY HAVE.
WHAT IF I TOLD YOU...
...I KNOW HOW TO *REMOVE* THE COLLAR?

NEW XANDAR.
WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME, DEMON?
I NEED... *HELP* IF MY PLAN IS TO WORK.
WHAT DO THEY SAY OF ME BACK IN DOOM'S WORLD?
THE BELIEF IS THAT YOUR LIFE WAS LONG SINCE TAKEN BY THE DEADLANDS.
CROSSBONES FORMED OUR UNIT TO PROVE IT.
CROSSBONES, EH? HM.
DOOM UNDERESTIMATING MY ABILITIES IS... *DISAPPOINTING.*
YOU TRIED TO ASSASSINATE DOOM BEFORE, DID YOU NOT?
THAT IS WHAT HE *WANTS* HIS PEOPLE TO THINK.
MY ONLY CRIME WAS DARING TO BELIEVE THAT HE IS TORMENTING BATTLEWORLD WITH THE *LIE* THAT HE IS GOD.
I IMAGINE *YOU* ARE GUILTY OF THE SAME AND THAT IS WHY HE SENT YOU TO A SIMILAR FATE.
IT IS NOT THAT SIMPLE. I WAS--

INTRUDERS!
GET BACK, FOUL BEASTS!
NO...LET IT HAPPEN.
TAKE OUR WEAPONS AS A SIGN OF PEACE TO YOUR LORD.
THIS LOOKS DANGEROUS.
IT IS.
LEAVE IT.
WHAT ARE WE...?
DO AS I DO, NO MATTER HOW UNDIGNIFIED.
OUR LIVES LITERALLY DEPEND ON IT.
WHAT IS THIS I SEE BEFORE ME?

ANOTHER OF YOUR...SACRIFICES, HERR SKULL?
WHAT HAVE YOU BROUGHT ME THIS TIME?

HOPE.
A WAY TO EXPAND YOUR KINGDOM, LORD ANNIHILUS.
THE DESTRUCTION OF THE SHIELD THAT KEEPS US CAGED AWAY FROM THE REST OF BATTLEWORLD.

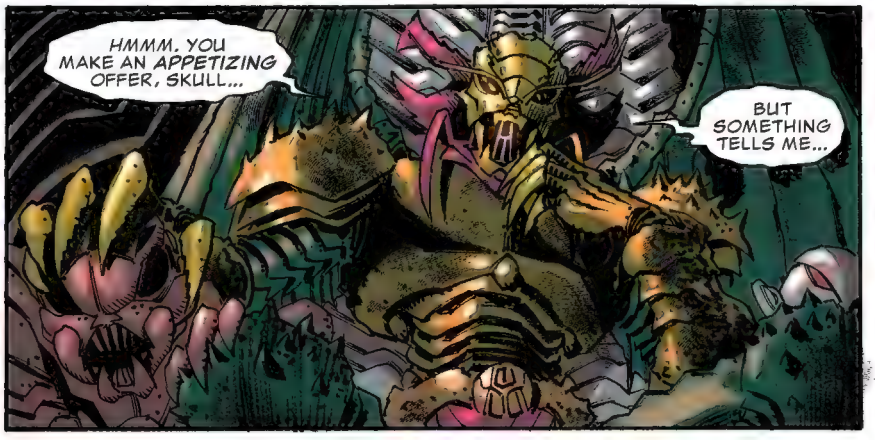

IMPOSSIBLE. THE SHIELD IS... IMPENETRABLE.

BUT I HAVE STUDIED IT, EXAMINED EVERY INCH, AND I KNOW WHERE IT IS AT ITS MOST DECREPIT.
THERE ARE CONCERNS IN NEW XANDAR THAT ARE GREATER THAN YOUR WASTED ERRANDS. MY ATTENTION SHOULD BE ON THOSE...
TAKE HIM AWAY!

WAIT...
THAT IS MY POINT...YOU NEED NOT BOTHER YOURSELF WITH THIS, LORD ANNIHILUS.
AS MUCH AS IT PAINS ME TO ADMIT THIS... WARS ARE WON BY MEN.
AND YOUR BUGS ARE JUST THE MEN I'M LOOKING FOR. PLUS...

...WE CAN USE MAGNETO!
HIS POWERS OVER METAL WILL ALSO HELP US TO DISMANTLE THE SHIELD... BUT WE NEED A DISTRACTION.
YOUR HORDE WOULD BE PERFECT.

SO YOU STORM THE SHIELD AND GET PAST THE SENTINELS... THEN WHAT?
SLAY GOD DOOM?
WHAT'S A LITTLE DEICIDE BETWEEN FRIENDS?


HMMM. YOU MAKE AN APPETIZING OFFER, SKULL...
BUT SOMETHING TELLS ME...

...THAT I AM NOT THE ONE YOU NEED TO CONVINCE OF THIS PLAN.
YOU LIED. YOU TOLD ME YOU BROUGHT ME HERE TO UNCHAIN ME FROM THIS LEASH.
THIS IS ABOUT MUCH MORE THAN JUST YOUR NEEDS, MAGNETO.
ANNIHILUS IS RIGHT...THIS IS A WASTE. YOU SHOULD HAVE JUST LET ME DIE WITH THE TEAM...
THE MOMENT WE TRY TO ATTACK, THE SHIELD'S FORCES WILL BE ON US.
YOU WILL NOT DIE.
DOOM FEARS YOUR POWER. IT'S WHY HE BOUND YOU SO. IF YOU ARE AT YOUR FULL POTENTIAL, YOU WILL SEE WHAT HE SEES. KNOW WHAT I KNOW.
THAT DOOM IS THE TRUE DECEIVER.
I WILL NEVER WORK FOR YOU, SKULL.
DON'T THINK OF IT AS WORKING FOR ME. THINK OF IT AS A MEANS TO THE END OF DOOM, AN END TO HIS FALSE RULE OVER THE PEOPLE OF BATTLEWORLD.
THE END OF THIS AND A RETURN TO YOUR LIFE.
YOU ASK ME TO TRUST YOU ABOVE CROSSBONES? ABOVE DOOM?
I HAVE MISPLACED MY TRUST ENOUGH IN THIS LIFE. I REFUSE TO BEND MY IDEALS NOW.
YOU MAY NOT HAVE FAITH IN ME...

BEEP
BUT I HAVE FAITH IN YOU.
KK
MY POWERS...
FINALLY.
HOW DARE YOU ATTACK ONE OF MINE!
HOLD, ANNIHILUS.
BEFORE YOUR HANDS WERE TIED BY DOOM, MAGNETO. BUT NOW WE CAN MAKE IT SO HE NO LONGER HOLDS BATTLEWORLD WITH HIS IRON FIST.
WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW THAT MY LIFE...
...IS YOURS?

RRAAAGHHHH!

THANOS

YOU IDIOT, RED SKULL!

YOU HAVE ENRAGED HIM AND HE WILL KILL US ALL!

KKKGGRRTSSHHH

NO! YOU ARE MISTAKEN, ANNIHILUS!

KKKGGRRTSSHHH

I WILL NEVER FORGIVE MYSELF FOR THIS, BUT...
...SHOW ME WHERE THE SHIELD IS WEAK AND IT WILL FALL.
AND DOOM'S RULE WILL END.
BATTLEWORLD WILL BE MINE.
TO BE CONTINUED...